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General Assembly

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Committee on Conferences
Organizational session for 2001

Annotated provisional agenda for the organizational session for 2001

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2001.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organization of work for 2001.
4. Programme of work for 2001.
5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2001.
6. Other business.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2001

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that thenceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

3. Organization of work for 2001

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even-numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

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At its organizational session for 2000, on 27 April 2000, the Committee adopted its agenda for 2000 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2001 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2001.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly are to be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 2001

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988.

Annexed to the present document is a draft agenda for the substantive session of 2001, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2001

6. Other business

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

Annex

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 2001

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   (a) Adoption of the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003;
   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:
      (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;
      (ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;
      (iii) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;
      (iv) Improved coordination and utilization of conference services;
      (v) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;
   (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;
   (d) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 2002-2003.
3. Documentation and publication-related matters:
   (a) Availability of documentation;
   (b) Submission of documentation.
4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters:
   (a) Use of remote interpretation;
   (b) Language services recruitment-related issues.
5. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.
6. Information technology.
7. Organization of work.
8. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003

A draft calendar for 2002-2003 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2001.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

The Committee has studied annually a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested that the organs be listed in the order of their utilization factors and that the utilization factors for a three-year period be provided in the report so that trends in the utilization factors of various bodies could be easily identified.

The Secretariat will submit a report on the above request.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services stated in its report on the inspection of the outcome of the consolidation of technical support services in the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (see A/55/803) that the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services should initiate discussions with the Committee to identify meeting demands in order to adjust servicing capacity and limit meeting duration. Mechanisms or guidelines for meetings or conferences should be established, in consultation with the Committee, to ensure that extended meetings were an exception and not the rule. Such guidelines should bear in mind the budgetary implications of extended meetings, as well as the toll those extended meetings took on the well-being of staff.

The Committee may wish to consider this issue in conjunction with the above-mentioned report on the utilization statistics of the core sample of organs.

(ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

At its substantive session of 2000, the Committee requested its Chairperson to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. In paragraph 1 of section II of its resolution 55/222, the General

Assembly reiterated its request to the Committee to consult with those bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated conference resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

An oral report will be presented on the matter.

(iii) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In paragraph 15 of section II of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to accommodate adequately major meetings and conferences, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Committee.

A written report will be submitted in compliance with the above request.

(iv) Improved coordination and utilization of conference services

In paragraph 20 of section II of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore all possible options to increase further the utilization of the conference centres at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Africa, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Committee.

The Secretariat will prepare a report on the above request.

(v) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In paragraph 4 of section II of resolution 55/222, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 2002-2003 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groups of Member States upon request by those groups, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Committee, a report on the implementation of that decision.

The Secretariat will provide a written report in compliance with the above request.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, in which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee.

A conference room paper on the requests received in this regard will be prepared by the Secretariat for consideration by the Committee. It will include, inter alia, the requests regarding the resumed third session of the Preparatory Committee for the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development and the resumed first session of the Commission for Social Development acting as the preparatory committee for the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

(d) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 2002-2003

The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1998/103 of 5 February 1988, decided to invite the Committee to review the Council's draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings and to submit, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council. The draft calendar for the biennium 2002-2003, which is to be presented to the Council at its substantive session of 2001 in July, is expected to be available for consideration by the Committee in June 2001. The Committee may wish to consider meeting at that time in order to discuss the draft and to convey its observations to the Council.

3. Documentation and publication-related matters

(a) Availability of documentation

In paragraph 4 of section III of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly invited intergovernmental bodies, during their organizational sessions or other appropriate periods before the commencement of their substantive work, to review with author departments the question of the availability of documentation for the proper functioning of those bodies, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session through the Committee.

The Secretariat will compile communications received from intergovernmental bodies in accordance with the above request.

(b) Submission of documentation

In paragraph 3 of section III of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to strengthen accountability and responsibility measures, where applicable, as requested in section C, paragraph 11, of Assembly resolution 54/248, to correct the alarming situation concerning the submission of documentation consistent with the six-week rule, and requested him to submit a report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

The Secretariat will submit a report on the above request.

4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters

(a) Use of remote interpretation

At its substantive session of 2000, the Committee requested the Secretariat to keep it informed of future activities in the field of remote interpretation. It also requested that future reports on the matter include an analysis of the cost of any proposed system and of its impact on the working conditions of interpreters. It recommended, furthermore, that remote interpretation not be confined to specific duty stations, that

each duty station be regarded both as recipient and as provider and that the Secretariat explore every opportunity for its introduction.

Furthermore, in paragraph 8 of section IV of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that future reports on the question of remote interpretation include an analysis of all costs of any proposed system, its impact on the working conditions of interpreters, the level of service provided to delegates, the satisfaction of delegations with the interpretation and the technical aspects of this method of interpretation.

In paragraph 10 of the same section of the same resolution, the General Assembly took note of the technical difficulties and timing problems referred to in paragraph 9 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/55/430) regarding remote interpretation, and requested the Secretary-General to further clarify the technical issues involved.

In paragraph 6 of section IV of resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that trials of remote interpretation were not confined to specific duty stations, and that each duty station was considered both recipient and provider.

The Secretariat will report on the latest experiments on remote interpretation in accordance with the above requirements.

(b) Language services recruitment-related issues

In paragraph 11 of section IV of resolution 55/222, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to comply with paragraphs 33 to 36 of Assembly resolution 53/208 A, and to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on possible measures to alleviate the excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and to ensure the required quality of conference services Secretariat-wide.

In paragraph 12 of the same section of the same resolution, the General Assembly urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to implement the system of incentives to attract language staff to duty stations with high vacancy rates, and requested him to submit a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session analysing problems relating to recruitment in language services at all duty stations and proposing actions to address them.

The Secretariat will report on these issues.

5. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003: Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services

At its 327th meeting, on 12 June 1991, the Committee decided to review the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budget for conference services, and to provide its views thereon to the General Assembly.

In light of that decision, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee, for consideration at its substantive session of 2001, the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

6. Information technology

At its substantive session of 2000, the Committee noted that it had currently become necessary to consider Internet activity an integral part of the work programme of the Organization. It was essential for the full multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the web sites that each content-providing office include web-specific content to be made available on the web sites, as part of its regular programme of activity, and make budgetary provisions accordingly. The Committee took note of the electronic display of the meetings programme at the United Nations Office at Geneva and encouraged the Secretariat to develop such a display at other duty stations.

Furthermore, in paragraph 1 of section V of its resolution 55/222, the General Assembly urged the Secretary-General to fill expeditiously the three official posts in the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat relating to web sites in Arabic, Chinese and Russian, in accordance with paragraph 151 of Assembly resolution 54/249.

In paragraph 2 of the same section of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on policy issues regarding the translation of non-parliamentary and public information material into all official languages and the possibility of providing those materials on the United Nations web site in all official languages; and in paragraph 3, the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the new re-engineered optical disk system, referred to in paragraph 9 of his report on information technologies (A/54/849).

The Secretariat will report on the above requests.

7. Organization of work

8. Adoption of the report